MY SPELLING EASEL

LEARNING

Paint landscapes on your computer by typing letters and spelling words

For ages 3 to 10

CONSUMER-WRITTEN PROGRAMS FOR

ATARI®

HOME COMPUTERS

APX

ATARI Program Exchange

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MY SPELLING EASEL

by

Al P. Casper

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Introduction

Overview

My Spelling Easel is a unique teaching tool for children as young as three years old. They can create more than one million colorful scene variations while they learn basic spelling and word recognition skills.

Words appear at the bottom of an empty screen, and the child types one or more letters, depending on the skill level. The word might be "blimp" or "dog" or "hills". As soon as the word is duplicated below the original, a picture representing the word appears, until the child has composed a whole fanciful landscape. Just for fun, whenever he wants to, he can change the colors of his picture by typing one of three keys. When the picture is complete, a song plays and he can start over to create an entirely new scene in the same way.

Children can use the keyboard or a Joystick Controller. There are four levels to select. In the "easy scene", the child can type any letter on the keyboard to add a picture to his landscape. The next level requires pressing a letter in the word. The third level calls for each letter of the word in any order, and the highest level calls for all the letters in order. If nobody's playing, the program automatically creates landscapes. Players can change levels while working on a landscape without disturbing the screen.

Required accessories

ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge

- Cassette version
  16K RAM
  ATARI 410 Program Recorder

- Diskette version
  24K RAM
  ATARI 810 Disk Drive

Optional accessories

One ATARI Joystick Controller

Contacting the author

Users wishing to contact the author may write to him at

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Milwaukee, WI 53202

Acknowledgments

Jill and Erin Casper helped with the graphics for *My Spelling Easel*, and provided testing and valuable comments.

Loading *My Spelling Easel* into computer memory

1. Insert the ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge into the cartridge slot of your computer.

2. If you're planning to use the joystick, plug your Joystick Controller into the first controller jack of your computer console. (You may, however, decide to use this version of the program later, and you can plug in the Joystick Controller at any time during the program.)

3. *If you have the cassette version of My Spelling Easel:*

   a. Connect your program recorder to the computer and to a wall outlet.

   b. Turn on your computer and your TV set.

   c. Slide the *My Spelling Easel* cassette into the program recorder's cassette holder and press REWIND on the recorder until the tape rewinds completely. Then press PLAY.

   d. Type CLOAD on your computer and then press the RETURN key two times. The tape will load into computer memory.

   e. After the tape finishes loading, the word READY will display on your TV screen. Leave the cassette in the program recorder, type RUN, and press the RETURN key. The program's first display screen will appear on your TV screen.

   If you have the diskette version of My Spelling Easel:

   a. Have your computer turned OFF.

   b. Turn on your disk drive.

   c. When the BUSY light goes out, open the disk drive door and insert the *My Spelling Easel* diskette with the label in the lower right-hand corner nearest to you. Close the door. (Use disk drive one if you have more than one drive.)

   d. Turn on your computer and your TV set. The program will load into computer memory and start automatically.

The first display screen

When the program has loaded into computer memory, the *My Spelling Easel* theme song plays while the following title screen displays:

Figure 1 First display screen

Options

After the title screen displays for a few seconds, a color-coded level appears at the bottom of the screen. Below the level, the words "OPTION OR START" display. The word "OR" flashes on and off, prompting you to make a choice. Press the OPTION key to change the level on the screen. Notice that the background color at the bottom of the screen changes each time you press the OPTION key.

When you select the kind of scene you prefer, press the START key to begin. The *My Spelling Easel* bus chugs across the screen to deposit a word with a dash displayed under each letter. The player changes the dashes to letters that duplicate the word.

You can change the level at any time by pressing the OPTION key. You return to the level selections. If you're in the middle of a scene, you don't have to start over no matter how many times you change the level. Just press the START key to resume.

A description of each of the levels follows.

EASY SCENE

The child can touch any key on the keyboard (except SHIFT, CTRL, or BREAK) to place an object on his easel. That is, the letter needn't be part of the word that displays. The instructions "PRESS ANY KEY" appear at the bottom of the screen.Each letter in the word then displays beneath the word, and the object takes its place in the landscape until ten objects complete the scene.

EASY SCENE II

This is similar to easy scene, because the child only has to type one letter to add the object to the landscape. But on this level, the letter must be one contained in the word. The child can try over again and again until he presses a right one, and then the object displays in the scene. The instructions "PRESS ONE LETTER" appear at the bottom of the screen.

TYPE A SCENE

For this option, the child must type each letter of the word. It doesn't matter if he types them in order, as long as he types them all. The instructions "EACH KEY/ANY ORDER" display below the word.

TYPE A SCENE II

This is similar to the previous scene, with one important change. The player has to type each letter in the correct order. The prompt "EACH KEY/IN ORDER" displays below the word. When the word is complete, the object takes its place in the landscape.

AUTO SCENE

My Spelling Easel creates landscapes automatically, one after the other. If the program is still on, and the child leaves the computer for a while, this option begins automatically. It could entice him to resume playing!

The instructions "OPTION TO STOP" appear at the bottom of the screen. Whenever you want to leave the AUTO SCENE for one of the other levels, press the OPTION key.

JOYSTICK

The player holds the joystick with the red button in the left corner, away from him and toward the TV screen.

In the first of the blanks below the word, a letter is tentatively filled in. The player moves the joystick toward the TV screen to change the letter toward the end of the alphabet, and toward himself to change it toward the beginning. When the correct letter appears, he presses the red joystick button. He continues through the whole word. He has to duplicate each of the letters in the word, but the order is decided for him. The message "JOYSTICK/BUTTON" displays at the bottom of the screen.

Older children like this option because it's challenging to move the joystick forward and backwards precisely. Beginning readers can make fast progress on this level, because they can easily see whether the letter is similar to or different from the one above it. While this option takes more time, it's an interesting variation.

Customizing a scene

Suppose the word "dog" displays, and a player doesn't want a dog in that scene. Pressing the SELECT key makes a new word appear. This gives the child some choices in the landscape he creates.

Changing *My Spelling Easel* colors

A player can change the colors at any time by typing 1, 2, or 3. This won't stop the progress of creating the landscape.

Completing a scene

Each complete scene has ten objects. When one is finished, the *My Spelling Easel* song plays. This is a good time to view the scene in three color schemes, or to change to another skill level. Pressing the START key clears the screen for another landscape.

Quick reference sheet

Special keys

OPTION KEY	Change skill level at any time
SELECT KEY	Change the word being displayed
START KEY	Start or resume the program
1, 2, and 3	Change colors

Levels

EASY SCENE	Press any key
EASY SCENE II	Type any one letter in the displayed word
TYPE A SCENE	Type each letter in the displayed word in any order
TYPE A SCENE II	Type each letter in the displayed word in the correct order
AUTO SCENE	The program runs by itself
JOYSTICK	Change the letter with the joystick; press the red joystick button.

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Review Form

We're interested in your experiences with APX programs and documentation, both favorable and unfavorable. Many of our authors are eager to improve their programs if they know what you want. And, of course, we want to know about any bugs that slipped by us, so that the author can fix them. We also want to know whether our instructions are meeting your needs. You are our best source for suggesting improvements! Please help us by taking a moment to fill in this review sheet. Fold the sheet in thirds and seal it so that the address on the bottom of the back becomes the envelope front. Thank you for helping us!

1. Name and APX number of program.

2. If you have problems using the program, please describe them here.

3. What do you especially like about this program?

4. What do you think the program's weaknesses are?

5. How can the catalog description be more accurate or comprehensive?

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent", please rate the following aspects of this program:

   _____ Easy to use
   _____ User-oriented (e.g., menus, prompts, clear language)
   _____ Enjoyable
   _____ Self-instructive
   _____ Use (non-game programs)
   _____ Imaginative graphics and sound

7. Describe any technical errors you found in the user instructions (please give page numbers).

8. What did you especially like about the user instructions?

9. What revisions or additions would improve these instructions?

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 representing "poor" and 10 representing "excellent", how would you rate the user instructions and why?

11. Other comments about the program or user instructions:

From

STAMP

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[seal here]

MY SPELLING EASEL
by Al P. Casper

- **Paint landscapes by typing letters and spelling words**
- **Teach children spelling in stages**
- **Change picture colors anytime**

Have you ever seen an artist set up an easel at the beach? Before long, a crowd gathers. You can expect the same thing to happen when you set up *My Spelling Easel* for children. The pictures they create are so captivating that everyone wants to get into the act! Beginning readers will love this program, and even non-readers can create pictures by touching any key.

Each time a word, such as "dog" or "hill," appears at the bottom of the screen, the child types one or more letters. A picture representing the word appears, until the child has composed a whole fanciful landscape. Children can play this multilevel game with the computer keyboard or with a joystick controller. On the easiest level the child can press any letter to add a picture to his landscape. The next level requires a letter in the word. The third level calls for each letter in any order, and the highest level requires all the letters in order. Thus, the program keeps up as a child's spelling and word skills develop. And if nobody is playing, the program automatically creates landscapes.

Requires:
- ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge

Cassette
(APX-10200)
- ATARI 410™ Program Recorder
- 16K RAM

Diskette
(APX-20200)
- ATARI 810™ Disk Drive
- 24K RAM

Optional:
- ATARI Joystick Controller

About the author

Al Casper

When Al Casper bought his computer, he thought he was just getting a toy—he wasn't sure what he was going to do with it. Two years later, he's the author of two prize-winning programs for small children. He began *My Spelling Easel* when his daughter, Erin, was two. He wanted to have a child type a key to display a picture on the screen, but he wasn't satisfied until he could combine the pictures to make the varied landscapes in this enchanting program. Erin is four now, and her sister, Amy, was born in September, 1982. Al is vice president of his family's printing business, where he has worked since he was thirteen. Until recently, he was bassoonist in a symphonic band, but his computing hobby has edged out his musical interests. The Caspers live in Saukville, Wisconsin.

Cassette: version 1 Diskette: version 1
Edition C